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later: Mr. Islam (Vice-Chair) ..... (Bangladesh)

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The meeting was called to order at 10 a.m.

Agenda item 23: Groups of countries in special situations

(a) Follow-up to the Fourth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries (A/67/88-E/2012/75, A/67/88/Corr.1-E/2012/75/Corr.1, A/67/92 and A/67/262)

(b) Specific actions related to the particular needs and problems of landlocked developing countries: outcome of the International Ministerial Conference of Landlocked and Transit Developing Countries and Donor Countries and International Financial and Development Institutions on Transit Transport Cooperation (A/67/210 and A/67/386)

1. **Mr. Acharya** (Under-Secretary-General and High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States), introducing the report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2011 to 2020 (A/67/88), said that, according to the report, economic growth in the least developed countries had picked up significantly in the past decade but their economic activity continued to be vulnerable to exogenous shocks. With no meaningful structural changes in their economies, natural resource-based sources accounted for a growing share of their gross domestic product (GDP). Progress in building infrastructure and access to energy had been mixed and, despite a reduction in the rate of poverty, the incidence of poverty and hunger was still the greatest challenge in those countries, where the proportion of the undernourished stood at 30 per cent. Food insecurity was particularly acute in the Sahel. Although the least developed countries' share in global trade had increased, much of that growth had been driven by the boom in exports of minerals, commodities and low-skill manufactured goods. Stringent rules of origin, preference erosion and non-tariff barriers had limited the effectiveness of preferential market-access schemes.

2. Although most least developed countries had made important strides towards universal primary education, gender equality and empowerment goals, their maternal, child and infant mortality rates and HIV prevalence rates remained high. Least developed countries affected by conflict had in many cases been unable to meet the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Reducing the debt burden of least developed countries and other vulnerable countries required continued international efforts. Since those countries depended heavily on official development assistance (ODA), development partners should deliver on their commitments despite the economic and financial crisis. Implementing the outcome of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20) would contribute to achieving the development aspirations of the Istanbul Programme of Action, whose priority areas (economic growth, environmental protection and social development) had been integrated into the Rio+20 outcome. In order to ensure sustainability, development partners should continue to support progress in countries graduating from the least-developed-country category. Extending or only gradually phasing out specific financial, technical and trade support for all such countries could help them to formulate, implement and monitor smooth transition strategies.

3. The Istanbul Programme of Action priority areas were increasingly reflected in the national development plans of least developed countries and donors' strategic documents. A number of countries had also supported the least developed countries in the context of South-South cooperation. The Office of the High Representative, the United Nations system and other international organizations had agreed on the content of a road map for the implementation of the Programme of Action, including the formulation of a set of monitoring indicators and the establishment of a corresponding working group.

4. In discussions on the post-2015 development agenda and sustainable development goals, the issues of resilience, structural transformation, development of productive capacity, equity and environmental sustainability should be considered in the context of the specific challenges faced by the least developed countries and other countries. The least developed countries should continue to take the lead on those issues and the development partners should support them. National ownership, capacity-building and institutional development should complement the expansion of South-South cooperation.

5. Introducing the report of the Secretary-General on ensuring the effective implementation of the functions of the Office of the High Representative for

the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States and strengthening its capabilities and its effectiveness, as well as the effectiveness of the United Nations system support provided to least developed countries (A/67/262), he said that, after describing the genesis and development of the Office of the High Representative, the report highlighted the need for better coordination of programme delivery and recommended that the United Nations system should scale up assistance to least developed countries in a timely, long-term, predictable and flexible manner; that existing inter-agency consultative group mechanisms should be institutionalized within the framework of the High-level Committee on Programmes; and that the capacity and scope of operations of his office should be enhanced.

6. Introducing the report of the Secretary-General entitled "Implementation of the Almaty Programme of Action: Addressing the Special Needs of Landlocked Developing Countries within a New Global Framework for Transit Transport Cooperation for Landlocked and Transit Developing Countries" (A/67/210), he said that, although the rate of economic growth of landlocked developing countries as a group had more than doubled in 2010, that increase had been largely due to rising commodity prices and export demand in 2011, the rate had decelerated. Despite some advances in net primary enrolment, gender parity in primary education, representation of women in decision-making, and the stemming of the spread of HIV/AIDS, progress in reducing hunger, poverty and child and maternal mortality and in improving access to sanitation had been slow.

7. Regarding the priority areas of the Almaty Programme of Action, substantial progress had been achieved in developing regional and subregional agreements between landlocked developing countries and their neighbouring countries on the harmonization of transport and transit policies, laws, procedures and practices. However, deeper and broader cooperation was needed in order to reduce the costs and shorten the time frames of transactions with landlocked developing countries. While transport infrastructure had been upgraded and expanded in all regions, all funding sources — including national budgets, regional and international development assistance and the private sector — must be harnessed in order to promote further investment in that area.

8. The landlocked developing countries must diversify their export base, enhance their processing capacities in order to add value to their exports and make a greater effort to specialize in services not subject to transit obstacles. The successful conclusion of the Doha Development Round was of utmost importance to them, particularly in the area of trade facilitation. Although ODA flows and aid for trade disbursements had increased, landlocked developing countries as a group had experienced a 12 per cent decrease in foreign direct investment (FDI).

9. The ten-year review of the implementation of the Almaty Programme of Action was a major undertaking of the entire international community. Accordingly, all stakeholders should actively engage in the preparatory process for the conference.

10. The report concluded with a number of recommendations by the Secretary-General aimed at facilitating the integration of the landlocked developing countries into the world economy through investment in infrastructure, simplification of transit procedures and greater market access.

11. **Mr. Dgacta** (Algeria), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, expressed concern that least developed countries were lagging behind in meeting many of the MDGs and called for full, timely and effective implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action in order to enable at least half of those countries to meet graduation criteria by 2020 through a renewed partnership for development. The least developed countries should base their policy choices on their own priorities, with enhanced, predictable and targeted support from the development partners; the United Nations system, including the Bretton Woods institutions; other multilateral institutions; regional development banks; and other stakeholders. He called for debt relief through cancellation of the multilateral and bilateral debts of least developed countries, duty-free and quota-free market access on a lasting basis for all least developed countries and easier accession to the World Trade Organization (WTO) for all developing countries, in particular the least developed countries, in accordance with the principles of special and differential treatment.

12. Specific action was needed to address the particular needs and problems of landlocked developing countries in line with the outcome of the 2003 International Ministerial Conference of

Landlocked and Transit Developing Countries and Donor Countries and International Financial and Development Institutions on Transit Transport Cooperation. As progress achieved by landlocked developing countries before the financial crisis was at risk, full, timely and effective implementation of the Almaty Programme of Action was more urgent than ever. The international community must enhance the flow of public and private investment and of development assistance to landlocked developing countries to help them to overcome their vulnerabilities, build resilience and set out on a path of sustainable social and economic development. Better coordination was needed in addressing the priorities of the Programme of Action and those identified in the midterm review, particularly regarding the construction, maintenance and improvement of transport, storage and other transit-related facilities.

13. Welcoming the decision to hold a 10-year review of the implementation of the Almaty Programme of Action, he said that regional, global and thematic preparations for it should be well structured and broadly participatory.

14. The Group of 77 and China took note of the outcome of the Fourth Meeting of Trade Ministers of Landlocked Developing Countries and the High-level Global Thematic Meeting on International Trade, Trade Facilitation and Aid for Trade, held in Almaty in September.

15. **Mr. Gaspard** (Haiti), speaking on behalf of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), endorsed the statements made by Algeria on behalf of the Group of 77 and China and by Benin on behalf of the Group of Least Developed Countries. The aim of the Istanbul Programme of Action to halve the number of least developed countries within 10 years presupposed resolving their structural problems, by, inter alia, increasing productive capacity. Economic growth, higher employment and effective solutions to the food, energy and economic crises, and to climate change, were all prerequisites to graduating from least-developed-country status.

16. Reaffirming the importance of some of the priority areas of the Istanbul Programme of Action — namely productive capacity; agriculture, food security and rural development; trade; human and social development; multiple crises and emerging challenges; and mobilizing financial resources for development and capacity-building — he said that increased technology transfer and financial support, as well as follow-up mechanisms at the national, regional and international levels, would be vital to ensuring the mutual fulfilment of commitments. The least developed countries had pledged to incorporate the Programme of Action goals into their development plans; development partners and the United Nations system must also incorporate them into their international cooperation plans.

17. Since the earthquake in January 2010, Haiti —the only least developed country in the Americas — had been promoting regional recovery through better land management and environmental development, electrification, water services, sanitation and national connectivity. It was rebuilding its economy by modernizing its agricultural, livestock and fishery sectors and developing industries and services. To revamp its social system, it was upgrading the educational system and promoting gender equality. Institution-building and decentralization were other key components of its recovery programme. Those ambitious objectives were realistic and in line with internationally agreed development goals, especially those of the Istanbul Programme of Action.

18. Landlocked and transit developing countries needed increased, timely and sustainable financial support in order to attain the MDGs and build their capacity to adapt to climate change. With additional funding, they would also be able to implement energy, transport and transit infrastructure, and information and communication technology projects; facilitate trade with other landlocked and transit developing countries; strengthen intraregional networks; and ensure the effective functioning of strategic maritime trade corridors.

19. Developed countries should expand market access and technology transfer to landlocked developing countries in order to lower their transaction costs. Foreign direct investment in those countries was also crucial. Contributions by donor countries and international financing and development institutions should be paid into the Trust Fund established by the Secretary-General to support the activities related to the follow-up to the implementation of the outcome of the Almaty International Ministerial Conference.

20. **Mr. Percaya** (Indonesia), speaking on behalf of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN),

endorsed the statement made by the representative of Algeria on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. All stakeholders needed to accelerate efforts to fulfil renewed political commitments and obligations to the least developed countries in order to enable them to graduate from least-developed-country status by 2020. Action on the eight priority areas of the Istanbul Programme of Action would be of particular importance to that end.

21. Despite notable progress in the implementation of the Almaty Programme of Action — thanks to the efforts of the landlocked developing countries and the cooperation of development partners and the United Nations system — further review of regulatory frameworks for transit transportation and trade facilitation, greater investment in transit transport infrastructure, and enhanced harmonization of transport standards and logistical capacity were needed. Landlocked developing countries, with assistance from their development partners, must strategically transform their economies and build their productive capacities. ASEAN welcomed the decision to hold a comprehensive ten-year review conference on the implementation of the Almaty Programme of Action (General Assembly resolution 66/214, para. 21).

22. As its members included both least developed countries and one landlocked developing country, ASEAN was committed to continued economic growth and improved connectivity among its members and with the rest of the world. To that end, ASEAN had developed and implemented various initiatives, programmes and work plans, including the Initiative for ASEAN Integration. In 2011, ASEAN and the Asian Development Bank had jointly launched the ASEAN Infrastructure Fund, a mechanism for pooling savings and leveraging financing for infrastructure development within the region. Moreover, ASEAN had adopted the Brunei Action Plan/ASEAN Strategic Transport Plan 2011-2015 for transport cooperation and integration towards the creation of the ASEAN Economic Community by 2015 and, with the support of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, the Master Plan on ASEAN Connectivity.

23. **Mr. Khitchadeth** (Lao People's Democratic Republic), speaking on behalf of the Group of Landlocked Developing Countries, called for the widest possible recognition and understanding by the international community of the specific developmental challenges and special needs of landlocked developing countries. Any relevant action should be fully and effectively implemented in a timely manner by all stakeholders. Only firm political will and sufficient support measures, including financial support, would make that possible. As the landlocked developing countries were not by themselves in a position to overcome their marginalization, subregional, regional, South-South and triangular cooperation frameworks, as well as North-South cooperation, would be key to building productive capacities and developing infrastructure in order to enhance regional integration.

24. Although progress had been made in many areas, more genuine cooperation and partnership at the bilateral, regional and global levels, and enhanced support, FDI flows and technology transfer were needed in order to help the landlocked developing countries overcome their vulnerabilities, build resilience and productive capacities and embark on a path of sustainable growth. The comprehensive ten-year review of the implementation of the Almaty Programme of Action in 2014 would provide a major opportunity for landlocked and transit developing countries and their development partners to develop a new action-oriented strategic framework for the next decade. Lastly, the current Almaty agenda should be enhanced to take into account challenges and opportunities that had not yet been apparent at the time of the adoption of the Programme of Action in 2003. The Group of Landlocked Developing Countries hoped the international community would actively contribute to the preparatory process and the review conference.

25. **Mr. Zinsou** (Benin), speaking on behalf of the Group of Least Developed Countries, endorsed the statements made by the representatives of Cameroon and Algeria on behalf of, respectively, the Group of African States and the Group of 77 and China. He said that implementation of the MDGs, the Istanbul Programme of Action and the sustainable development goals was critical from the least developed countries. Most least developed countries continued to grapple with enormous economic, human and social development challenges due to structural constraints and particular vulnerabilities. Poverty and hunger, food insecurity, investment uncertainty, commodity price volatility, financial fragility, high energy costs and climate change hampered this progress at all levels, and yet official development assistance had decreased in 2011.

26. The Ministerial Declaration of the Least Developed Countries, adopted in New York on 27 September 2012, clearly reaffirmed the commitment to implementing the Istanbul Programme of Action by, inter alia, integrating its provisions into national policies and development frameworks and conducting regular reviews with the full involvement of all key stakeholders. However, in order to build a critical mass of viable and competitive productive capacity in agriculture, manufacturing, services, infrastructure development and structural transformation, the development partners of least developed countries must fulfil their commitments at the earliest in a predictable manner. In that connection, the Group of Least Developed Countries endorsed the recommendations contained in the report of the Secretary-General (A/67/88). Moreover, it was vital to ensure a smooth transition of countries graduating from least developed country status, without any disruption of development plans, programmes and projects. Accordingly, the Group called for the adoption of an effective strategy to that end by the General Assembly at its current session.

27. He stressed the importance of extending the mandate of the Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States to include effective follow-up and monitoring of the implementation of the Programme of Action, and invited the Secretary-General to address the issue of providing staff and financial resources commensurate with the work that needed to be done. The Group wished to reiterate its support for the institutionalization of inter-agency mechanisms to follow up the implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action. It called upon the international community to increase voluntary contributions in order to enable the Office of the High Representative to meet its responsibilities regarding such implementation.

28. *Mr. Islam (Bangladesh), Vice-Chair, took the Chair.*

29. **Mr. Latriche** (Observer for the European Union), speaking also on behalf of the acceding country Croatia; the candidate countries Iceland, Montenegro, Serbia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia; the stabilization and association process countries Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina; and, in addition, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine, said that the commitment of the European Union and its member States to least developed countries and landlocked developing countries on the heels of the Fourth United Nations Conference on the Least Developed Countries had led to specific action. Thus, regarding the implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action, the European Union and its member States had met their commitment to channel 0.15 per cent of gross national income as ODA to the least developed countries through bilateral and regional programmes undertaken in partnership with the countries concerned. It would focus its unilateral trade preferences on the most vulnerable countries and on key sectors, including energy, agriculture and bond security. The European Union would also continue to offer duty-free and quota-free access to its market for all products of least developed countries (except arms and ammunition). While the European Union and its member States would continue to provide the least developed countries with increasingly focused aid for trade, what was really needed was a jointly defined path which would go beyond that to seek broader policy coherence with a view to development.

30. The European Union was actively involved in the work of the Ad Hoc Open-ended Working Group to Further Study and Strengthen the Smooth Transition Process for the Countries Graduating from the Least Developed Country Category. The work ahead should focus on a predictable and orderly phasing out of post-graduation benefits. He strongly encouraged trading partners, including emerging economies and developing countries in a position to do so, to maintain market access benefits for a well-defined period after graduation. Transition strategies must be tailored to each country's particular context, opportunities and vulnerabilities in the framework of improved coordination and coherence of existing programmes. Moreover, the European Union and its member States were determined to accompany the landlocked developing countries in overcoming the specific challenges they faced. It looked forward to fruitful negotiations on the modalities of the comprehensive ten-year review conference on the implementation of the Almaty Programme of Action so as to ensure a focused and efficient process towards the best possible outcome.

31. In conclusion, he noted the synergies between the follow-up processes to the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20), the preparations for the post-2015 development agenda and

the Istanbul Programme of Action, which should be addressed in a coherent manner.

32. **Ms. Medvedeva** (Russian Federation) said that in addition to increasing its contribution to international development assistance, the Russian Federation was promoting efforts to enhance the international trade of the least developed countries and to strengthen global food security, including through the development of innovative technologies. The least developed countries still needed to enhance their industrial capacity and investment in infrastructure, including transboundary facilities; create effective national mechanisms to support investment; and develop entrepreneurship and a microfinance system. In the spirit of the Almaty Programme of Action, the Russian Federation promoted the development of partner relations with countries in north-eastern Asia under the Greater Tumen Initiative, particularly in the area of transport infrastructure linking Mongolia, the north-eastern provinces of China, the major transport hubs of the Republic of Korea and Japan, and Russian ports. The term ten-year review conference on the implementation of the Almaty Programme of Action should, inter alia, facilitate the further operationalization of global partnerships for transport to and from landlocked developing countries through transit countries.

33. **Mr. Dhital** (Nepal) said that given the heavy dependence of the least developed countries on international support to finance their development activities, the reduction in 2011 of bilateral ODA in real terms gave grounds for concern. The overall flow of resources to the least developed countries should be aligned and commensurate with their structural vulnerabilities and multiple challenges — geographical handicaps, declining FDI, high rates of inflation and unemployment, a limited number of commodities for export, dependence on energy imports, and a high level of poverty and hunger — and addressed through the effective implementation of the Almaty Programme of Action. The ten-year review conference in 2014 should produce a post-Almaty development agenda enabling landlocked developing countries to join and fully participate in the global trading system. He stressed the need for integrating the least developed countries and landlocked developing countries into all United Nations processes. Nepal's situation called for unfettered access to the sea through improved transit transport, including a multi-modal network. At the national level, Nepal had upgraded its transit and transport facilitation agency in order to meet current requirements.

34. **Mr. Bathija** (Afghanistan) said that, unless concerted and resolute action was taken, the short-term impacts of food, energy and financial crises would have long-term adverse effects on the least developed countries. There was thus an urgent need to implement the Istanbul Programme of Action. ODA provided a vital boost to national development efforts but donor countries must respect the principle of national ownership and improve the coordination, transparency and predictability of aid. A rapid and successful conclusion to the Doha Development Round would make a significant difference in the development of the least developed countries. Climate change and environmental degradation constituted the greatest threat to the progress of countries in special situations. Drought in Afghanistan and African countries would pose an obstacle to achieving Goals 1 and 7 on poverty and hunger eradication and environmental sustainability, respectively. In accordance with the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities, Afghanistan called on all countries to take immediate action to fulfil their climate change mitigation commitments. Developed countries should also fulfil their technology transfer and funding pledges in order to help the least developed countries achieve clean and sustainable growth. Technical assistance was needed for further development of communications and transport infrastructure. In post-conflict countries in particular, development and security went hand in hand; the development of natural resources should not exacerbate existing tensions. Conversely, international and regional efforts to improve the standard of living and enhance security could have synergistic effects. Accordingly, regional cooperation should be strengthened in the areas of security and development.

35. **Mr. Narkhuu** (Mongolia) said that, although the landlocked developing countries, in cooperation with their transit neighbours and with the support of their development partners, had achieved some progress and strengthened their policy reform and ODA allocated to their transport and communication infrastructure had improved, considerable challenges remained. Those challenges — linked to their remoteness from international markets and the effects of the recent multiple crises — had major implications for their social and environmental development.

36. The international community and research institutions should develop a set of vulnerability indicators for early warning purposes, as proposed in General Assembly resolution 66/214, paragraph 11, and for building resilience in connection with economic, trade, social and environmental issues. As high transaction costs were largely responsible for the marginalization of the landlocked developing countries, their products deserved particular attention. In addition to the trade facilitation negotiations within the context of the Doha Development Round, the international community should take into consideration relevant measures in accordance with the Almaty Ministerial Declaration adopted at the Fourth Meeting of Trade Ministers of landlocked developing countries held in September. He proposed an expeditious implementation of the Aid for Trade initiative with targeted support for landlocked developing countries in such areas as capacity-building in formulating trade policies, implementation of trade facilitation measures and international agreements, investment in transport infrastructure, and strengthening productive capacity.

37. Mongolia had set up a national committee on trade and transport facilitation, composed of representatives of the Government, the private sector and non-governmental organizations (NGOs); implemented a comprehensive sector development programme entitled "Transit Mongolia" in line with the priorities of the Almaty Programme of Action; and carried out a customs modernization project. Those landlocked developing countries that had not yet done so should accede to or ratify the Multilateral Agreement for the Establishment of an International Think Tank for Landlocked Developing Countries to be hosted by Mongolia.

38. In conclusion, he said that Mongolia was prepared to collaborate with other delegations to draft a resolution on preparations for the 2014 review conference.

39. **Mr. Rahman** (Bangladesh) said that the integration of least developed countries into the global economy was contingent upon the fulfilment of the development partners' ODA commitments, cancellation of all outstanding debt, increased investment flows, unhindered market access and technology transfer. The Doha Development Round should be expeditiously concluded and deliver, inter alia, duty-free and quota-free market access and support for capacity-building in the least developed countries. The least developed countries were even being marginalized in South-South trade. Developed countries and developing countries in a position to do so should grant duty-free and quota-free market access to all products from least developed countries under the early harvest measures of the World Trade Organization (WTO). The international community must address the development challenges faced by the landlocked and transit developing countries through the full, timely and effective implementation of the Almaty Programme of Action, taking into account the national sovereignty of all countries involved. Transit developing countries could play a crucial role in overcoming the difficulties encountered by landlocked developing countries, in the framework of a transparent transit-costs agreement based on mutual trust, cooperation and comparative advantages.

40. **Mr. Enge** (Brazil), noting that landlocked developing countries faced a set of particular challenges that required specific responses, called for the full, timely and effective implementation of the Almaty Programme of Action and welcomed the decision of the General Assembly to hold a ten-year review conference. Although the least developed countries as a whole had experienced greater economic growth than in the previous decade, Brazil was concerned at the uneven and insufficient progress in implementing the Istanbul Programme of Action, especially with respect to alleviating poverty, combating hunger, achieving gender equality and reducing maternal mortality.

41. The global financial and economic crisis had affected the developing countries in general, and least developed countries in particular, as a result of both reduced demand in the developed countries and declining ODA. There was a need for timely and targeted international and regional support to complement national efforts to build resilience in the face of economic shocks. Brazil had developed many cooperation projects to offset the vulnerability of agriculture-dependent least developed countries to land degradation, drought, desertification, deforestation, water and air pollution and climate change, compounded by scant funding for research and technology or to improve techniques, poor infrastructure and unfavourable regulatory frameworks. Through its agricultural research corporation in Ghana and other programmes, Brazil was supporting the commodities sector in least developed countries — it

had launched an antiretroviral medicine factory in Mozambique as part of its effort to address the high incidence of HIV/AIDS in the least developed countries. Its Carrefour-Feuilles project in Haiti was emblematic of the support it provided to least developed countries and post-conflict countries through the India, Brazil and South Africa (IBSA) Fund.

42. Brazil was finalizing a legal instrument on a duty-free, quota-free scheme for least developed countries. Its Ministry of External Relations, together with the Community of Portuguese-speaking Countries, was providing training in international trade to Angola, Cape Verde, Guinea-Bissau, Mozambique, Sao Tome and Principe and Timor-Leste.

43. Brazil participated actively in the work of the Ad Hoc Open-ended Working Group to Further Study and Strengthen the Smooth Transition Process for the Countries Graduating from the Least Developed Country Category. A more institutionalized package of support measures for graduating countries was needed to guard against reversals in development after graduation. Brazil's commitment to supporting recently graduated least developed countries was illustrated by its ties and cooperation with Cape Verde, which had only strengthened since the graduation process. It hoped to replicate that experience with other countries.

44. **Mr. Haniff** (Malaysia) said that Malaysia remained committed to the success of the Istanbul Programme of Action through South-South cooperation and endeavoured to assist least developed countries in attaining the MDGs and other internationally agreed development goals by 2015 and beyond. The role of developed countries as development partners was as crucial as least developed country ownership and leadership in formulating policies based on their national priorities, conditions and requirements. More than 25,000 participants from 140 countries had benefited from the Malaysian Technical Cooperation Programme (MTCP) since its inception in 1980, including 10,000 participants from 45 least developed countries and former least developed countries. Malaysia welcomed triangular cooperation involving developed partners and recipient countries as part of South-South cooperation. In that framework, Malaysia had cooperated with Governments and institutions in various countries under the Third Country Training Programme (TCTP) to offer short courses to participants from developing countries, including the least developed countries. Lastly, he welcomed the recommendations made by the Ad Hoc Open-ended Working Group to Further Study and Strengthen the Smooth Transition Process for the Countries Graduating from the Least Developed Country Category.

45. **Mr. Alemu** (Ethiopia) said that while the least developed countries bore primary responsibility for financing their own development, support from development partners through enhanced market access, reduction of non-tariff barriers and other trade distorting measures, aid for trade and FDI was equally vital. Ethiopia had mainstreamed the Istanbul Programme of Action into its five-year development plan, known as the Growth and Transformation Plan, and had established reporting, monitoring, reviewing and evaluation mechanisms to follow up its implementation. Its aim was to join the group of middle income countries by 2020. With an average growth in GDP of 11.4 per cent in the period 2004-2011, Ethiopia was making an effort to diversify its economy; in the past two years, the percentage share of agriculture had decreased and the share of industry was now larger. Productive capacity in the road and railway transport, energy and telecommunication sectors had increased substantially. Ethiopia had also embarked on a green economy strategy in order to promote sustainable development and had made progress towards achieving the MDGs, particularly by expanding and improving education and health services.

46. The least developed countries needed to make massive investments in infrastructure, build their productive capacities and increase outlays on human development. At the same time, development partners should fulfil their ODA and other commitments and provide additional resources to the least developed countries. Mobilization of the resources required for infrastructure development remained a major challenge for landlocked developing countries. Consequently, the international community, development partners and multilateral development institutions should furnish the financial, technological and capacity-building assistance to enable them cope with external shocks and mitigate emerging challenges.

47. **Ms. McGowen** (United States of America) pointed out that, although the least developed countries had experienced relatively strong growth over the

preceding decade, progress had varied by both country and sector. On their current trajectories, many least developed countries would not meet the MDGs. Over and above ODA, on which they had relied in the past, the least developed countries needed to mobilize domestic financial resources, attract private investment from abroad and form broader partnerships with emerging and traditional donor economies. Countries that emphasized transparency and democratic accountability would be more successful in attracting foreign investment and unlocking domestic financing. And those that strove to include women, youth and disadvantaged groups in their economies would experience broader and more sustainable economic prosperity. The United States — which had provided $10 billion in development assistance to least developed countries in 2011 — joined others in recognizing the need for a smooth transition so that graduation from the least developed country category would not disrupt development cooperation. Advance planning between recipient countries near graduation and their development partners would mitigate the risk of such disruption.

48. In order to reap the benefits of trade, landlocked developing countries should be able to move their goods to market safely and routinely. That process required infrastructure but, as the Almaty Programme of Action made clear, investments in infrastructure would only be as viable as the legal and regulatory systems underpinning them. In 2012 alone, the United States had provided over $4.8 billion in assistance to landlocked developing countries and would continue to help them. However, the most important partners of the landlocked developing countries remained their transit developing country neighbours. The United States was committed to ensuring that the ten-year review of the Almaty Programme of Action in 2014 would be a success and would lead to a broader and deeper partnership in support of the landlocked developing countries.

49. **Mr. Kumar** (India) said that, in four decades, only three least developed countries had been able to graduate from least developed country status. In order to improve that situation, the international community should integrate least developed countries into global governance, and work to end their physical and developmental disconnect with the world. India had never promoted the concept of a global village but, in accordance with its ancient scriptures, had always believed in the concept of a global family. A village could be subject to inequality and discrimination — between rich and poor, for instance — while the family was governed solely by the principle of live and let live, mutual love, and equal care for all members.

50. Poverty eradication must be a key component of the sustainable development goals and the post-2015 development agenda, and adequate resources must be mobilized to fill the huge financing for development gap in the least developed countries. In that connection, India called on donor countries to urgently fulfil their ODA commitments of 0.15-0.20 per cent of GNI for the least developed countries. He stressed the importance of technology transfer, capacity-building, enhanced economic support measures, duty-free and quota-free market access schemes and a development-oriented outcome of the Doha Round in bringing the least developed countries closer to graduation.

51. As part of South-South cooperation, India's partnership with the least developed countries had gone beyond technical assistance to include trade, investment and humanitarian support. Its duty-free tariff preference scheme, lines of credit and Aid for Trade programmes had led to significant expansion of its trade with least developed countries. It had also set up a $1 billion line of credit to support implementation of the Istanbul Programme of Action. Moreover, India engaged in special bilateral cooperation agreements with its landlocked neighbours to facilitate transit of their goods and attached priority to further strengthening its ties with those countries, including through regional initiatives. India stood committed to meeting the critical infrastructure needs of the landlocked developing countries, offering $300 million in financial assistance to construct the Ethiopia-Djibouti railway line.

52. India had never subscribed to the philosophy of maximizing happiness for the majority of people but had always stood for happiness for everyone in the world. He invited the international community to work towards making such happiness possible.

53. **Mr. Versegi** (Australia) said that the Istanbul Programme of Action and the Rio+20 outcome document contained a set of commitments that must not be taken lightly. Australia was increasing its ODA and recognized that sustainable agriculture and prudent management of natural resources were crucial to

sustainable economic growth and development of the least developed countries.

54. Referring to the issue of a smooth transition for graduating States, he said that Australia welcomed the recommendations of the Ad Hoc Working Group. As a significant development and trading partner of many least developed countries, Australia was committed to cooperating with them in order to avoid abrupt reductions in financial and technical assistance and trade preferences, and to ensuring their long-term development. Australia supported efforts to improve opportunities for graduating countries and create stronger incentives for graduation. As more and more countries moved towards meeting the criteria for graduation, Australia stood ready to participate in preparing smooth transition strategies to meet their specific needs and to help maintain their development momentum.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.